

**NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER
FOR FOSTER CARE &
PERMANENCY PLANNING**
at the Hunter College
School of Social Work

A service of the
Children's Bureau/ACF/DHHS

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Permanency Planning Today

PERMANENCE for Young People FRAMEWORK

This framework was developed and discussed at a national Experts Meeting co-sponsored on June 7-8, 2004 by the National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning at the Hunter College School of Social Work and Casey Family Services through the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice. The Expert Meeting is a core component of the Breakthrough Series Collaborative on Permanence for Young People that both organizations hope to help to co-sponsor in 2005, along with other national organizations and states. This framework can also stand on its own to guide child welfare agencies across the country to help young people achieve and maintain permanent family relationships. It neither prescribes nor recommends best practice models; rather, it proposes six key components of successfully identifying and supporting permanent family relationships for young people in out-of-home care.

The belief and value that every child and young person deserves a permanent family relationship is paramount in this work. Permanence is not a philosophical process, a plan, or a foster care placement, nor is it intended to be a family relationship that lasts only until the child turns age 18. Rather, permanence is about locating and supporting a lifetime family. For young people in out-of-home placement, planning for permanence should begin at entry into care, and be youth-driven, family-focused, culturally competent, continuous, and approached with the highest degree of urgency. Child welfare agencies, in partnership with the larger community, have a moral and professional responsibility to find a permanent family relationship for each child and young person in foster care.



Permanence should bring physical, legal and emotional safety and security within the context of a family relationship and allow multiple relationships with a variety of caring adults. At the same time, young people in out-of-home care must be given opportunities, within the family and community environment, to learn the array of life skills necessary to become independent and interdependent adults. Ensuring that children and young people in foster care have both permanent relationships AND life skills for independence is critical to future well-being.

Permanence is achieved with a family relationship that offers safe, stable, and committed parenting, unconditional love and lifelong support, and legal family membership status. Permanence can be the result of preservation of the family, reunification with birth family; or legal guardianship or adoption by kin, fictive kin, or other caring and committed adults.

Philosophy

This youth permanency framework is built upon seven key foundational principles. These principles express the overarching values that must guide all policies, programs, practices, services and supports for young

people. They are interrelated and work together in a dynamic, synergistic way. While these principles are presented in a sequential order, this order does not reflect a preferential order or each principle's respective worth or relevance. Each principle is critical and should be reflected in all policies, programs, practices, services and supports of the agency.

All permanency policies, programs, practices, services and supports should be developed and implemented in ways that:

- 1** Recognize that every young person is entitled to a permanent family relationship, demonstrate that the agency is committed to achieving that goal, and include multiple systems and the community at large in the effort to identify and support such relationships.
- 2** Are driven by the young people themselves, in full partnership with their families and the agency in all decision-making and planning for their futures, recognizing that young people are the best source of information about their own strengths and needs.
- 3** Acknowledge that permanence includes: a stable, healthy and lasting living situation within the context of a family relationship with at least one committed adult; reliable, continuous and healthy connections with siblings, birth parents, extended family and a network of other significant adults; and education and/or employment, life skills, supports and services.
- 4** Begin at first placement. Efforts to achieve timely permanency through reunification with the young person's birth family must begin as soon as the young person is placed, while concurrently engaging in contingency planning with family involvement regarding the range of permanency options that can ensure stability and continuity of relationships if continued out-of-home placement is needed.

- 5** Honor the cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and religious/spiritual backgrounds of young people and their families and respect differences in sexual orientation.
- 6** Recognize and build upon the strengths and resilience of young people, their parents, their families, and other significant adults.
- 7** Ensure that services and supports are provided in ways that are fair, responsive, and accountable to young people and their families, and do not stigmatize them, their families or their caregivers.

Components

The seven key principles described above can be translated into practice through six component areas of the work of the agency. Work done in each component should reflect the core values defined by the key principles. In order to develop an effective and comprehensive system of permanence for young people, child welfare agencies should address all six of these components. Dramatic improvements in the overall system of identifying, supporting, and maintaining permanent family connections for young people in out-of-home placement will only occur when improvements in each of the six individual components are achieved.

- 1** Empower young people through information, support, and skills (including independent living skills) to be fully involved partners in directing their own permanency planning and decision-making.
 - A** Staff value, support, and provide opportunities for young people to advocate for themselves, young people receive preparation that enables them to acquire the skills necessary to do so, and communication with them is honest, direct, and respects them as true partners.
 - B** Agencies place young people in positions where they are in charge of driving discussions and options and they receive training, preparation,

services and support from child welfare agencies, multiple systems and the community at large to do so.

- C** Staff are trained and supported in using specialized permanency planning skills that assist young people in addressing their fears, feelings, family issues, hopes, dreams, and aspirations.
- 2** Empower a wide range of individuals to participate in permanency planning, beginning with birth family and including extended family, tribal members, past, present and future caregivers, other adults who are significant to the young person, other systems with whom young people are involved, and other community members.
 - A** Young people and individuals identified by them, including birth parents, extended family, caregivers, tribal members, and others who care about them are meaningfully included and supported in participating in all meetings, case planning, and decision-making as true partners.
 - B** Agencies respect and accommodate the needs of young people and individuals identified by them, including birth parents, extended family, caregivers, tribal members, and others who care about them, to enable and support their participation as true partners.
 - C** Young people are supported in maintaining, identifying, seeking out, and developing relationships with significant connections, including birth parents, siblings, both paternal and maternal kin, and other significant caring adults (such as past caregivers), including those that may have occurred earlier in life.
 - D** Multiple systems within the community, including health, mental health, education, recreation, job training, juvenile justice, family court, faith-based organizations and the business community are engaged in the permanency planning process, where appropriate, for individual young people.

3 Consider, explore and implement a full range of permanency options in a timely and continuous way.

A Agencies, young people, and their families together identify a full range of actual and available permanency options without imposing limitations based on the age of the youth, beginning with an extensive identification of the family of origin.

B Agencies articulate to young people, their families, and their caregivers the full range of actual and available permanency options and the implications of each.

C The full team (including young people, family members, child welfare staff, staff of other systems with whom young people are involved and other community stakeholders) receive training and support on a full spectrum of options and are provided opportunities to express and work through their values related to permanency.

D Concurrent planning for multiple options and relationships is employed early, regularly and on an ongoing basis for all young people, integrating a plan for family permanency together with a plan for the development of life skills and the provision of supports and services.

E The permanency option decided upon together with each team (including young person, family members, and other significant adults) is based on the young person's individual situation, needs and preferences; represents his or her best interest; and is reassessed regularly until a plan is achieved that includes a permanent family relationship as well as life skills, supports and services.

F Agency infrastructure and resources value and support the consideration of all potential family permanency outcomes as they relate to meeting the best interests of the young person.

4 From the beginning, continuously and concurrently employ a comprehensive range of recruitment options.

Recruitment from Existing Connections and Relationships

A Young people are asked regularly and systematically about people in their lives who could assist in helping them plan for their future and/or serve as permanent resources.

B Young people are provided with the skills and opportunities to interact with multiple systems and community members in ways that help build permanent relationships.

C Multiple strategies are employed to identify potential permanent family resources and significant adult connections, including a review of the entire case file, as well as conversations with multiple sources, such as the young person, birth parents, siblings, extended family members, tribal members, former and current caregivers, teachers, prior case workers, and other individuals in the community who care about the young person.

D Youth-specific recruitment strategies specific to each young person's network of relationships are used to simultaneously engage individuals identified by young people in a joint planning process and in a process of mutual exploration of the extent and level of permanent family commitment they could provide.

Recruitment of "New" Resource Families

E Youth and those who care for them are educated on possible recruitment strategies for new resource families, including relevant considerations regarding confidentiality, sharing of information and protection of the youth from exploitation.

F Youth-designed, self-promoting recruitment strategies and processes are employed, depending on the youth's preferences and level of comfort.

G All recruitment messages are shaped by the voices of young people and families who have lived/experienced the continuum of permanency relationships.

H An array of methods and media are

used to raise awareness about the needs of young people, as well as to communicate recruitment messages to the community.

I A pool of potential permanency resource families who reflect the cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and religious/spiritual backgrounds of the young people needing placement exists and is continually replenished through targeted recruitment efforts.

J A pool of potential permanency resource families who have a demonstrated knowledge of, commitment to, and concern for young people and can parent young people with the unique needs, characteristics, and issues represented in the population exists and is continually replenished through targeted recruitment efforts.

5 From the beginning of placement, provide services and supports to continuously ensure that young people and their families have every opportunity to achieve and maintain physical, emotional, and legal permanence.

A Young people, in partnership with agencies, make decisions about obtaining services and supports, which are made available through clearly established, consistent processes.

B Birth family and tribal members, caregivers, other significant adults in a young person's life, and service providers involved with the youth are involved in decisions about obtaining services and supports, which are made available through clearly established, consistent processes.

C Services and supports are provided to young people and their parents or their permanent families in ways that are:

1. urgent: recognize the essential priority of assuring love and commitment to young people while meeting their well-being needs, including their educational needs;
2. comprehensive: address all aspects of a young person's well-being, including health, mental health, education and life skills;



3. continuous: available from the day of entry into care to beyond the achievement of a permanency goal, regardless of age;
 4. universally available: are available regardless of permanency goal, educational or employment choice, living arrangement, placement location, or permanency outcome;
 5. customized: meet the unique needs of young people, birth families and permanent families and are assessed and adjusted regularly to reflect progress and changes;
 6. culturally appropriate: value and honor the culture of the young person and his/her birth family and permanent family; and
 7. accessible: provide access to the full range of services and supports in a timely and convenient manner.
- D** The financial needs of young people and their families are recognized, sources of funding to meet their needs are identified, and assistance in accessing such funding is provided, regardless of legal status.
 - E** Community members and community agencies are involved in providing and advocating for supports and services to young people and their families.
 - G** Agencies collaborate with other systems that serve young people and families to engage young people and families as true partners and to provide services, support and opportunities during and after placement.
 - A** Agency staff and partners in other systems receive training, education, and support to address their fears, feelings, assumptions, and beliefs about permanency and positive youth development to support a culture of youth and family partnership.
 - B** Young people, their families, and others who care about young people are directly involved in the development and delivery of all agency and cross-system training and education about permanency and positive youth development to support a culture of youth and family partnership.
 - C** Young people, their families, and the systems that serve them (including courts and attorneys) have a common understanding, language and set of beliefs about permanency definitions and work to expand permanency options with a focus on youth-defined options.
 - D** Agency staff, together with young people and families, engage both traditional and non-traditional partners in the community to broaden awareness and to advocate for the need for life skills and permanence for young people in out-of-home care.
 - E** Young people and families are continuously involved in designing, implementing, and evaluating the systems that serve them.
 - F** Agency staff, together with young people and families, continuously identify and address critical system, cross-system, and policy changes needed to develop an effective and comprehensive system of permanence for young people.

A printer-friendly copy of this framework is available for download from our website at http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/permanence-for-young-people.html

Evaluation of a Foster Parent Training Program Yields Promising Results

Reprinted from the Children's Bureau Express, September, 2004

The State of New Hampshire uses Federal Title IV-E funds to support training for prospective foster parents through a partnership between the State Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) and the College for Lifelong Learning (CLL). In 2002, the partnership conducted an evaluation to determine the effectiveness of its 21-hour training program, Foundations for Fostering (FFF). The evaluation found this curriculum contributes to the knowledge base of prospective foster parents, enhances feelings of preparedness and confidence, and serves as a useful resource that participants can draw upon during initial foster placements.

Prospective foster parents (41) were surveyed at the beginning and end of training, and face-to-face interviews were conducted with participants (13) who went on to become licensed foster parents and had a child placed within 3 months of completing training.

Results included:

- * Participants felt significantly more prepared for foster parenting after training.
- * Participants gained a better understanding of children in placement and the child welfare system in general.
- * Participants appeared to apply the knowledge they gained when children were placed in their homes.

From the interviews, evaluators concluded that the sharing of fostering stories and real-life situations made a significant impression on the participants. Participants also indicated the need for further training in a number of areas, including the needs of older children, behavior management strategies, emotional disabilities, and services available to children in placement.

From these findings, evaluators concluded that preservice foster parent training offered through a Title IV-E university-agency partnership can provide numerous benefits. These findings support previous research indicating the importance of foster parent training. The partnership is repeating this study in State FY 2004 with an eye toward increasing the sample size.

More information about the Education and Training Partnership and the FFF curriculum is available on the CLL website at www.cll.edu/about/etp/.

For more information about the completed study (Part I), ongoing evaluation efforts, or to request a manuscript, please contact:

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PERMANENCE for Young People MEASURES



Overview

This document is a companion to the Framework for Permanence for Young People and may be used to support a Breakthrough Series Collaborative on Permanence for Young People. It provides a list and brief description of a handful of key measures that can be used by agencies across the country to evaluate their progress on improving the way they achieve and maintain permanence for young people. As with the Framework document, these measures were developed and discussed at a national Expert Meeting on June 7-8, 2004 co-sponsored by the National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning at the Hunter College School of Social Work and Casey Family Services through the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice.

Although there are a multitude of measures that agencies can use to define and evaluate permanency services, supports, and outcomes, child welfare agencies are already responsible for many required data reports such as the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), and state mandated reports. To that end, the expert group limited the number of suggested key measures to seven and included several that are being captured through existing data systems already.

Agencies that expect real and sustainable improvements in their systems of permanence for young people should track all seven of these measures. No single measure can indicate whether the system is improving for young people and their families. Moreover, sometimes focusing on a single measure causes an unintended negative effect on another key measure. Thus, the complete body of measures proposed in this document should be used together. It is recommended that these measures be tracked on a monthly basis, as this is the only real way to see incremental progress and make adjustments as needed.

Other systems that serve and support young people should also be encouraged to track key measures of permanence as well. Courts, employment offices, housing organizations, schools, and similar agencies and organizations are partners in this work and this partnership should include shared responsibility and accountability through joint measurement.

While only a few sets of measures recommend tracking data by race/ethnicity, it is strongly encouraged that all measures are tracked by race/ethnicity. To identify and address disparities in outcomes for children and families of color in the public child welfare system, all measures should be tracked by race/ethnicity.

Key Measures

Available Potential Resource Families

Increase in the number and percentage of resource families (foster, adoptive, kinship families) who have a demonstrated knowledge of, commitment to, and concern for young people and can parent young people with the unique needs, characteristics, and issues represented in the population.

Placement Settings & Stability

Decrease in the number and percentage of young people in non-family settings, e.g. institutional and group home settings.
Decrease the number of moves young people experience in out-of-home care.

Participation in Meetings

Increase in the number and percentage of young people who report that they actively participate in their own case planning and decision-making and that their wishes are respected.

Training & Education

Increase in preparation, training, education, and/or support that is provided about permanence for young people to key constituency groups such as:

.... Young people, families and extended families
.... Agency staff Courts Tribal courts
.... Attorneys CASA workers Schools
.... Probation officers Community providers
Other key partners as determined by the young people or the Department

Maintaining Connections

Increase in the number and percentage of young people who maintain connections with their birth parents, siblings, extended family members and other significant adults in their lives.

Youth-Defined Permanence

Increase in the number and percentage of young people who leave out of home care reporting that they have the optimal level of family belonging and membership based on their vision and definition of permanence.

Legal Permanence

Increase in the number and percentage of young people who achieve legal family permanence through reunification, adoption, or guardianship (by race and ethnicity).

A printer-friendly copy of these measures is available for download from our website at
http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/permanence-for-young-people.html

Resources for Permanency Planning Today

Books

Kinship Care: Making the Most of a Valuable Resource

2003, Rob Geen (Ed.)

Since the early 1980s, states child welfare agencies' use of relatives as foster parents has grown rapidly, yet little information is available on this practice. This lack of information has made it difficult to evaluate how well kinship care ensures children's safety, promotes permanency in their living situation, and enhances their well-being—three basic goals of the child welfare system. This book sheds light on this changing issue. Using a study involving focus groups of child welfare workers and kinship caregivers, in addition to interviews with local administrators, advocates, and service providers, the authors describe front-line kinship care practices in today's system. They also examine how and when child welfare agencies use kin as foster parents, how their approach to kinship care differs from traditional foster care, and how kinship care practices vary across states. The book also features the experiences of actual kinship foster parents, their challenges, and their interaction with agencies and the courts. Finally, the book provides recommendations for policy development, worker and caregiver training, and issues for further research.

Real Belonging: Give Siblings Their Right to Reunite

2004, by Lynn S. Price

When she was eight years old, Lynn Price found out that she was a foster child and had a sister in foster care with another family on the other side of town. The impact of that startling news and the trauma of a disconnected sibling relationship continue to motivate Lynn in her life's work as a child advocate. Despite the obstacles placed in her path, Lynn Price has achieved great things in a life distinguished by success, significance and service. With a degree from the University of Illinois, three children, and twenty years as an executive in the telecommunications industry, Lynn has turned her passion to giving back to kids in the system. This book tells her story and that of Camp To Belong, an international non-profit organization dedicated to reuniting siblings placed in separate foster homes and other out-of-home care for events of fun, emotional empowerment and sibling connection.

Children Missing from Care: An Issue Brief

2004, Caren Kaplan

This issue brief from the Child Welfare League of America is intended to inform and guide federal, state, and local policymakers, as well as members of the law enforcement and child welfare communities, in the development of effective policies and practices with children who are missing from the care of a child welfare agency, whether through running away, abduction, or inattentiveness of the custodial agency. It will be followed by coordinated guidelines from CWLA and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to enhance agencies' capacity to monitor the whereabouts and safety of children in foster care and to effectively respond when a child in care is missing. <http://www.cwla.org/programs/fostercare/childmiss.htm>

Toolbox #3: Facilitating Permanency for Older Youth

2004, Gerald P. Mallon

Facilitating permanency for youth in foster care can be challenging. Although the child welfare system has maintained in its policies and practices a clear focus for younger children in need of permanency, it has been less explicit on the logistics of facilitating that goal. This publication focuses on promising practices and approaches shown to promote permanency for youth. Contents include a current literature and research review; highlights of promising strategies, partnerships, and innovative public policies; case review prototypes; strategies for including the adolescent in the service planning process; definitions of outcomes for adolescent permanency; and many other areas. This book will provide practitioners with the vision and the practical guidance needed to facilitate and support permanency for youth and thus improve youth chances for safety, permanency, and well-being.

Child Maltreatment 2002

This annual publication presents data on child maltreatment collected by the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) from state child protective services (CPS) agencies. Included in the report are national- and state-level findings on perpetrators of maltreatment, CPS work force workload, and preventive and post-investigation services. The report is intended for use by policymakers, child welfare practitioners, researchers, and others concerned with child well-being. <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/cm02/index.htm>

Videos

Parenting Wisely: An Effective Interactive Program

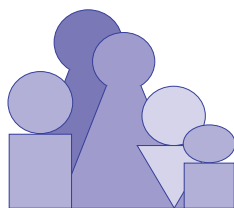
This video training program was developed to teach parents of children and adolescents important parenting skills to prevent or arrest the development of serious problems. It is based on the Functional Family Therapy model and has been awarded Exemplary Model Program for preventing delinquency and substance abuse in children and teens by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). <http://www.parentingwisely.com>

Through the Eyes of the Child

This introductory video presents issues related to the foster care system and special needs adoption from the perspective of the children within that system. The target audience is individuals and groups focused on permanency for children waiting in the foster care system <http://www.davethomasfoundationforadoption.org>

Children in the Middle: Divorce Education for Parents

This is a skills-based program that helps children and parents deal with the children's reactions to divorce. It is built around a 37-minute video for parents that teaches parents the skills needed to avoid putting children in the middle of their conflicts, and a 30-minute video for children to help them understand why parents divorce. Available open-captioned and in Spanish. A SAMHSA Model Program. <http://www.divorce-education.com>



Best of Weekly Update

The NRCFCPP publishes an electronic newsletter each week that keeps subscribers informed about new Internet-based publications, conferences and other events of interest to child welfare professionals. This section lists some of valuable resources we have highlighted over the past few months.

STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES

This package on strategic planning for child welfare agencies presents an overview of strategic planning and explores key questions - what it is, why child welfare agencies should do it, who should be involved, and what it involves. It describes a four-stage process for strategic planning:

- o Preparation
- o Planning
- o Implementation
- o Review and Revise

The steps in each of these stages are illustrated by examples of strategic planning processes being used by state and county child welfare agencies today. The package also includes information on legal requirements and national standards around planning, and an overview of technical assistance and written resources available to child welfare agencies

<http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/>

A FAMILY'S GUIDE TO THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

This guide was developed as a collaborative effort among the Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development, the American Institutes for

Research, the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, the Child Welfare League of America, and the National Indian Child Welfare Association. It is organized into 10 sections and includes a general description of the child welfare system and information about child protective services, the service planning process, home- and community-based services, out-of-home placement services, choices for permanent placements, the Indian Welfare Act, parents' rights and responsibilities, and approaches used by child welfare agencies to help families reach their goals. It is intended for use by families, agencies serving children and families, educators, and others in building positive relationships and increasing family participation in service planning.

<http://www.cwla.org/childwelfare/familyguide.htm>

FOSTERING THE FUTURE: SAFETY, PERMANENCE & WELL-BEING FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

The Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care released recommendations to overhaul the nation's foster care system. The Commission undertook a comprehensive assessment of two key aspects of the foster care system: the federal financing structure and the court system. They determined that reform in these two areas would have far-reaching effects for children in foster care and is a critical first step to solving many other problems that plague the child welfare system. <http://pewfostercare.org/>

AN ANALYSIS OF STATES' CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEWS AND PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLANS FROM A YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE

This paper, written by the National Resource Center for Youth Development, presents an analysis of issues, relating specifically to adolescents, identified in the final Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) reports and the Program Improvement Plans (PIPs). The report analyzed reports for the presence of youth related issues and explores their ramifications in the PIP process.

<http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/NRCYD/publications.htm>

MAINSTREAMING FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCING: BUILDING & SUSTAINING PARTNERSHIPS

This article by Joan Pennell of North Carolina State University suggests that the practice of family group conferencing in child welfare has moved away from the initial goal of joint problem solving and toward "systemic goals of maintaining control, meeting regulations, containing costs, and avoiding litigation." She recommends nine steps for building partnerships for initiating and sustaining family group conferencing.

http://www.iirp.org/library/vt/vt_pennell.html

OVERREPRESENTATION OF MINORITY CHILDREN: HOW THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM IS RESPONDING

This report from the Children's Bureau suggests that children of color, especially African American children, are overrepresented in the child welfare system for a variety of reasons, including poverty and racial bias. It is one of the first studies to explore the attitudes and perceptions of the child welfare community regarding racial disproportionality. It emphasizes the need for stronger administrative support, increased staff training in both general child welfare issues and cultural competency, and more internal and external resources to better serve families.

<http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/other-pubs/children/index.cfm>

ANSWERING THE CALL: A NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO ENCOURAGE ADOPTION OF CHILDREN FROM FOSTER CARE

The United States Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families (ACF), the Adoption Exchange Association (AEA), and the Collaboration to AdoptUSKids, created a new public service advertising campaign (PSA) with the Ad Council to encourage the adoption of children from foster care. The campaign uses print, radio, television and internet PSAs to encourage prospective parents to realize that they "don't have to be a hero to be a hero," and "don't have to be perfect to be a perfect parent." Visit the link below to view an example of one of the television PSAs.

http://www.adoptuskids.org/servlet/page?_pageid=412&_dad=portal30&_schema=PORTAL30

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON PERMANENCY

This report from California Youth Connection and the California Youth Permanency Project summarizes what current and former foster youth in California had to say on the subject of permanency and lifelong connections. Click on "CPYP New Documents." Must reading!
<http://www.cypyp.org/>



The 2004 National Adoption Month

The 2004 National Adoption Month was launched earlier this month - in plenty of time to plan events for November - thanks to a collaborative effort on the part of the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse and The Collaboration to AdoptUSKids, both services of the Children's Bureau.

This year's theme "Answering the Call - You don't have to be perfect to be a perfect parent builds on the Collaboration to AdoptUSKids' national recruitment campaign Answering the Call as well as the adoption public service campaign launched early this past summer by the Ad Council which uses print, radio, television, and Internet PSAs to encourage families to step forward to be adoptive parents.
(<http://www.adcouncil.org/campaigns/adoption/>).

Highlights of the 2004 National Adoption Month website include: November 2004 Calendar with suggested activities to celebrate adoption in November:
(http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/general/adoptmonth/activities_calendar.cfm)

National Adoption Day, (Saturday, November 20, 2004), a day when hundreds of children around the country will have their adoptions finalized in local courts and jurisdictions throughout the nation.
(<http://www.nationaladoptionday.org/2004/>).

Resources for Professionals on Recruiting and Retaining Foster and Adoptive Parents
(http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/general/adoptmonth/resources_profess.cfm).

Resources for Parents and Teachers
(http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/general/adoptmonth/resources_parents.cfm)

Visit the 2004 National Adoption website at:
(<http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/general/adoptmonth/index.cfm>).

PERMANENCE for Older Youth



There are about 126,000 children and youth in foster care who are waiting to be adopted. Almost half are older than nine, and almost a third are older than eleven. Many of these children will grow up without the nurturance and security of a permanent family. Every year about 20,000 young people leave the foster care system with no place they can call "home."

Waiting children and youth are identified as those who have a goal of adoption and/or whose parental rights have been terminated. Youth 16 years and older whose parental rights have been terminated and who have a goal of emancipation are excluded from national estimates.

It is possible for these young people to achieve permanency through one of the processes acceptable under the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) - reunification, adoption, legal guardianship, or another permanent planned living arrangement. However, it is up to us, child welfare professionals who work with and on behalf of these young people, to make sure it happens for each and every one of them.

We know that there are family-centered casework and legal strategies that support permanency, including:

- ❑ targeted and appropriate efforts to ensure safety, achieve permanence, and strengthen family and youth well-being;
- ❑ reasonable efforts to prevent unnecessary placement in out-of-home care when safety can be assured;
- ❑ appropriate, least restrictive out-of-home placements within the child's family, culture, and community, with comprehensive family and youth assessments, written case plans, goal-oriented practice and concurrent permanency plans encouraged; and
- ❑ reasonable efforts to reunify families and maintain family connections and continuity in young people's relationships when safety can be assured.

When working with teenagers in need of permanency, we must remember that the concept of permanence is often not clear-cut for adolescents in foster care. Adolescence is by definition a time of transformation, growth, and changes, physically, intellectually, morally, spiritually, socially, and

emotionally. Developmentally, adolescents are struggling to identity who they are and as a parallel process they are also developing their unique world view. The primary tasks of adolescence are identity formation and establishing independence, with a backdrop (heightened for youth in the foster care system) of distrust of adults, reluctance to accept advice, and resentment of adult authority.

So - guiding and working with young people in need of permanent families is challenging, to say the least. We need all the help we can get!

The National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning joined together with the Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice at Casey Family Services to bring 27 experts in the field of youth permanency together at a two-day meeting in June 2004. At this meeting they crafted a Framework for Youth Permanency designed to guide child welfare agencies across the country to help young people achieve and maintain permanent family relationships. Also developed - a companion group of measures aimed at helping agencies track whether their efforts achieve results for young people.



We are pleased to present the Framework and Measures in this issue of Permanency Planning Today. They represent the best thinking of the people listed below. We thank these experts, who include young people; birth, foster, adoptive, and kinship parents; and representatives of local, State, and national child welfare agencies and organizations devoted to the well-being of children, youth and families, for their dedication and hard work in preparing these important documents.

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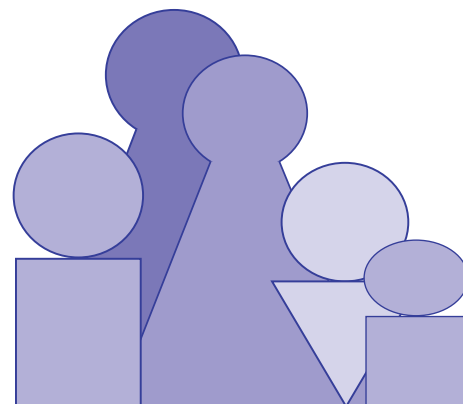
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A Response to Misleading NY Times Editorial

A recent editorial in the New York Times presented some misleading statistics about child maltreatment and foster care in the United States. While the conclusion it reached - that "firmly enforced national standards and federal aid to help support them are the best hope for...children currently at risk" - is worthy, it is inflammatory to indicate that there are "millions" of such children.

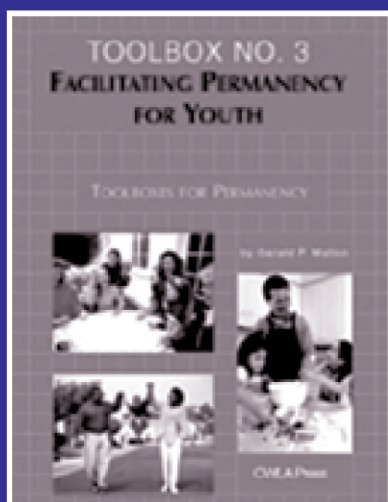
Here are the facts from the Children's Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, available on the Internet at www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/cmreports.htm:

- ▲ 896,000 children were determined to be the victims of abuse or neglect in 2002. Over 77% of these children were mistreated by one or more of their parents. This amounts to 12.3 cases of maltreatment for every 100,000 children in the country.
- ▲ In the 38 states that reported the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim, 3,934 of the 651,109 perpetrators (0.5%) were foster parents and 1,256 (0.2%) were staff in residential facilities.
- ▲ While no maltreatment in foster care is acceptable, we must recognize that it is beyond the power of any agency to prevent every instance of abuse or neglect. The federal government has set a standard for substantiated or indicated maltreatment in out-of-home care as 0.57% or less - a standard met in 2002 by 60.53% of the 38 reporting states.
- ▲ 1,400 children died from abuse and neglect in 2002, the vast majority at the hands of their parents. 46 of these deaths were of children in foster care - 3.2%.
- ▲ Cases of severe abuse and neglect, by foster parents as well as by birth parents, make headlines and horrify the nation.

However, these are aberrations. The vast majority of children who enter foster care receive excellent care from committed foster parents. 57% return home to their parents. 36% spend five months or less in care and another 25% leave care in under 18 months.

The Child and Family Service Review process was designed to enable the Children's Bureau to ensure that State child welfare agency practice is in conformity with Federal child welfare requirements, to determine what is actually happening to children and families as they are engaged in State child welfare services, and to assist States to enhance their capacity to help children and families achieve positive outcomes. The reviews look at seven child welfare outcomes in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. While it is true that no state has achieved substantial compliance on all seven of the standards, that does not mean the states have "failed" the reviews. Standards were set high, and the first round of reviews was intended to provide a baseline measure of current practice. Detailed reports provide states with specific areas in which they can improve their practice. The process then involves the preparation of Program Improvement Plans to address areas of weakness, which will be followed by a second round of reviews. What do states need to improve their practice and achieve better outcomes for children in the United States?

They need fewer individuals who complain about inadequacies and abuses, and more who are willing to step up to the plate themselves. Every state needs foster families and adoptive families, as well as people able to provide other types of support. Visit www.fostercaremonth.org for information!



Toolbox #3: Facilitating Permanency for Youth

by Gerald P. Mallon, DSW

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A Service of the Children's Bureau ACF/DHHS

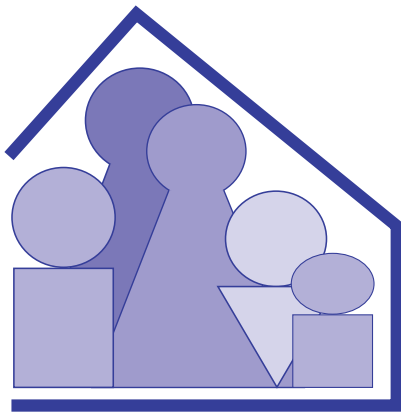
Facilitating permanency for youth in foster care can be challenging. Although the child welfare system has maintained in its policies and practices a clear focus for younger children in need of permanency, it has been less explicit on the logistics of facilitating that goal. This publication focuses on promising practices and approaches shown to promote permanency for youth. Contents include a current literature and research review; highlights of promising strategies, partnerships, and innovative public policies; case review prototypes; strategies for including the adolescent in the service planning process; definitions of outcomes for adolescent permanency; and many other areas. This book will provide practitioners with the vision and the practical guidance needed to facilitate and support permanency for youth and thus improve youth chances for safety, permanency, and well-being.

Please see the others in the series

Toolbox #1: Using Visitation to Support Permanency

Toolbox #2: Expanding the Role of Foster Parents in Achieving Permanency for Children

For order info go to: <http://cwla.org/pubs/pubdetails.asp?PUBID=10048>



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